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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 29 April 2014, 5.55 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros
	China	Mr. Liu Jie-yi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 5.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: When we last met to discuss Ukraine on 16 April (see S/PV.7157), there was a glimmer of hope within the Council for the first time in weeks as we waited for the outcome of the four-party talks that were to be held in Geneva the following day, aimed at de-escalating the crisis.

Today, we regret that the emerging spirit of compromise of 17 April appears to have evaporated. The implementation of the Geneva statement has stalled as parties have sought to give different interpretations of what had been agreed upon. Unhelpful rhetoric on the part of many has further escalated the already high tensions. Meanwhile, the situation in parts of eastern and southern Ukraine continues to deteriorate.

On 25 April, a group of military monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and accompanying Ukrainian staff were captured and detained. Although one monitor has since been released, the rest remain in detention. As the Secretary-General stated yesterday, the United Nations strongly condemns this act and urges those responsible to release monitors and staff immediately, unconditionally and unharmed. I urge all those with influence on this situation to assist urgently in resolving it. Lives are potentially at stake. Groups of militia and armed civilians are increasing in number and springing up in more and more cities across the region, seizing buildings, mounting roadblocks and shutting off whole towns and communities from the rest of the country. There are increasing reports of torture, kidnappings and violent clashes.

Earlier today, self-declared separatist groups reportedly began an operation to take control of Lugansk. Just a few hours ago, they stormed the police headquarters in the city, opening fire with automatic weapons and throwing stun grenades at police officers still inside the building. Earlier in the day, they seized a number of other buildings, including the regional administration building and the prosecutor's office. The State security building in Lugansk, seized in early April, continues to be under the control of these groups.

Yesterday, 27 April, Hennadiy Kernes, the mayor of Kharkiv, was shot in the back by unknown assailants. he remains in critical condition. on the same day, self-declared separatists seized a local Government building in Kostiantynivka, also in Donetsk oblast, while in Donetsk itself a pro-unity rally turned violent when separatist elements reportedly attacked the group with clubs and chains. Also on 27 April in Kharkiv, clashes between about 400 opponents and 500-600 supporters of a unitary Ukraine broke out and resulted in a number of injuries.

What I just described are developments that have occurred only in the past four days. These developments should alarm us all.

In terms of the role of the United Nations and the international community, the United Nations human rights monitoring mission provides fact-based and publicly available information on the state of human rights in Ukraine. The Secretary-General has continued his high-level engagement with world leaders. He is the Council's partner in using his good offices to help bring about a return to diplomacy and a peaceful resolution. In this spirit, he has asked me to return to Ukraine next week.

As the Secretary-General stated yesterday,

> "we must find a way back to the spirit of compromise exhibited on 17 April in Geneva. A diplomatic and political solution to this crisis is both imperative and long overdue".

Time is of the essence. Let us work concertedly and expeditiously towards peace and stability.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

The United Kingdom requested this meeting because we are deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in southern and eastern Ukraine and by the fact that the Geneva agreement of 17 April is not yet achieving its objective to restore stability in Ukraine. It is vitally important that the Security Council maintain its close scrutiny of events in Ukraine and the consequent threat to international peace and security.

We will doubtless hear Russian claims that it is the actions of the Ukrainian Government that are destabilizing the south and east of the country. In fact, it is Russia that has taken further dangerous steps aimed at fomenting instability in Ukraine. It has directed paramilitary actions in Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Lugansk and other towns in eastern Ukraine. Russian military jets and helicopters have made incursions into Ukrainian airspace. Russian armed forces have held further military exercises on Ukraine's border. These are all clear attempts to escalate tensions within Ukraine.

These steps have been matched with intensified rhetoric. The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation has asserted that Russia has a legal basis to intervene in Ukraine in accordance with the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. This is a claim that takes Russia's distortion of international law to a new level. There is no justification or legal basis whatsoever for invoking Article 51. Russian nationals are not under threat in Ukraine — a fact that has been reaffirmed on numerous occasions, including by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission and by the Commissioner for National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This is deeply irresponsible rhetoric intended to threaten and intimidate the Ukrainian Government and provide a bogus pretext for further illegal breaches of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As a result of Russia's activities, there has been a further marked deterioration in the security situation in eastern and southern Ukraine, as Mr Feltman has just said. The United Kingdom condemns the abduction at gunpoint and public parading of an OSCE Vienna Document inspection team and its Ukrainian escorts. We call upon those responsible to ensure the safe treatment and immediate release of the team, and we urge Russia, itself an OSCE member, to use its influence to ensure that this happens without further delay.

On 17 April, talks between Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union succeeded in agreeing steps to reduce tensions. The United Kingdom welcomed that agreement and the opportunity it offered for restoring stability in Ukraine. But this opportunity has been spurned. Since 17 April, the actions undertaken by Kyiv and Moscow stand in stark contrast. Let us consider the facts.

First, the Geneva agreement called for all sides to refrain from violence, intimidation and provocative actions. For its part, the Ukrainian Government has acted with commendable restraint when undertaking measured and proportionate security operations to deal with armed groups illegally occupying Government buildings and forming checkpoints. The Ukrainian Government has the right and responsibility to uphold the rule of law and protect both its citizens and its officials on Ukrainian territory. Russia, on the other hand, continues its military manoeuvres and aggressive rhetoric.

Secondly, the agreement called for all illegal armed groups to be disarmed. The Ukrainian Government started to collect illegal weapons almost as soon as it came to power. There are now no illegally armed protesters on Maidan Square and no armed self-defence groups patrolling the streets of Kyiv. But in Sloviansk and other eastern cities, we continue to see, encouraged by Russia, heavily armed paramilitary forces armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

Thirdly, the agreement called for all illegally seized buildings, occupied streets and public places to be vacated. The Ukrainian Government has been systematically and incrementally removing barricades around the Maidan and the protests there are gradually shrinking. By contrast, Russia has refused to use its influence to restrain armed groups in the east. In fact, Foreign Minister Lavrov stated on 23 April that Russia will not call for these illegal militias to put down their arms and vacate buildings. Instead, barricades and roadblocks in eastern and southern Ukraine have been steadily reinforced.

Furthermore, while Ukraine has put a draft law to the Ukrainian Parliament that would provide amnesty for protestors who vacate Government buildings and lay down their weapons, Russia has not rescinded the order by the Russian Parliament to authorize the use

of military force in Ukraine and will not condemn the widely reported abuses by pro-Russian armed groups in southern and eastern Ukraine. These abuses include at least 11 kidnappings, among them several Ukrainian and international journalists, and the torture and murder of a Ukrainian local official and two other local people. The deplorable shooting yesterday of the Mayor of Kharkiv was another sign of the violence being instigated against those who have opted to support a united Ukraine.

Finally, Ukraine has begun an inclusive process of constitutional reform on the decentralization of power. It has announced measures to guarantee the protection of the Russian language, and it has condemned instances of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, whereas Russian rhetoric continues to whip up tensions with false claims that the Russian language is under threat in Ukraine and allegations that the Kyiv Government is anti-Semitic.

When one lays out the facts, they cut through the fiction of Russian propaganda. Having illegally annexed Crimea, Russia is now destabilizing southern and eastern Ukraine as part of its plan to undermine the ability of the people of Ukraine to determine peacefully their own future. In doing so, it is threatening international peace and security. But the doors of diplomacy remain open. We urge Russia to abandon the dangerous course it is pursuing and to take urgent steps to implement the Geneva agreement.

In the extremely difficult circumstances which now confront it, the Ukrainian Government is striving to take forward a programme of democratization and inclusive constitutional and economic reform that aims to correct the long period of misgovernment and corruption that preceded it. It is in all our interests to support this process. This is not about zero-sum game politics; it is about restoring stability to Ukraine and to the wider region and allowing all the people of Ukraine to determine their own future. We urge Russia to become part of this collective international effort.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

Since early April, the situation in Ukraine has deteriorated continuously. In several eastern cities, armed militants, acting in a professional and synchronized manner, have taken possession of public buildings. The similarity of the operations that were observed in Crimea is striking. The violence continues. Seven observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were taken hostage on 25 April. They must be released without delay. On Sunday, the mayor of Kharkiv was the target of an attack and is in a serious condition.

We are witnessing a a subversive operation that has been planned, barely disguised and orchestrated by Russia. Russian special forces do not even hide anymore. Some time ago, our Russian colleague denied their involvement in Crimea, while his President recognized it a few days later. No doubt, he will do the same with respect to current events in Ukraine. France strongly and unequivocally condemns those unacceptable attempts by Russia to destabilize Ukraine. We must halt this course of confrontation and work towards de-escalation. The joint declaration agreed on in Geneva on 17 April by Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union shows the way forward. It calls on all parties to refrain from violence and acts of intimidation or provocation. It provides for the disarmament of illegal armed groups, evacuation of occupied buildings and public places and amnesty for those who lay down their arms, with the exception of individuals with blood on their hands. It is essential that the declaration be implemented by all parties without delay and in good faith, so that the Ukrainian State can re-establish its sovereignty over its territory. The OSCE's special monitoring mission has been asked to play an important role in implementing those de-escalation measures, and it is essential that it be allowed to act without hindrance.

However, since the declaration's adoption we have seen two distinct attitudes. On the one hand, the Ukrainian Government has shown its good faith in implementing the declaration by drafting an amnesty law, launching the process of constitutional reform and accelerating the dismantling of barricades and armed groups in Kyiv. In that regard, I commend the restraint and composure of the Ukrainian security forces, who have responded appropriately to the repeated destabilizing actions they are dealing with. We can only imagine what any other Government would have done in the face of such provocation on its national territory.

On the other hand, the Russian side has complied with none of the 17 April commitments. There has been no condemnation of the separatist actions that have spawned new violence and no call for public buildings to be evacuated. There has been no appeal to the pro-Russian militants to exercise restraint and end their

attacks on munitions depots and on their compatriots, some of whom are said to have been tortured, and on journalists as well. Far from condemning those who took the OSCE observers hostage, today Russia is calling the mission's presence in eastern Ukraine a provocation. However, we sincerely hope that the announcement yesterday of a halt to the Russian military manoeuvres on the Ukrainian border is true and will be the first step in a genuine de-escalation.

We are at a turning point. With every moment that passes, the risk of anarchy and bloody incidents grows. That is why we call on the Russian authorities to choose the path of de-escalation through the immediate demonstration of respect for the commitments made in the Geneva declaration. Yesterday, together with our European Union partners and the United States, we adopted new targeted sanctions. If the situation worsens, we will be forced to ratchet up the sanctions once again. That is not what we would prefer. Our goal is to ensure the holding on 25 May of free, inclusive and transparent presidential elections, whose good conduct will be guaranteed by the presence of international observers. The possibility that the actions of some violent groups could threaten the holding of this democratic exercise is unacceptable.

We also support constitutional reform that would ensure respect for minorities and some decentralization. It is up to all Ukrainians to decide their future. Then history and geography can bring about an inevitable and desirable reconciliation between a democratic, peaceful and independent Ukraine and a Russian Federation that will renounce its dangerous nationalist illusions.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this emergency meeting on Ukraine, and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the developments in the situation in eastern Ukraine. We believe, however, that the Ukrainian people and the international community will not judge us on the number of public briefings we organize in the Council or the toughness of our statements, but on our political will and how we use our influence to effectively help Ukrainians resolve the crisis in their country.

We are witnessing a situation that is deteriorating every day and leading slowly to an open war that might involve countries of the region and beyond. Indeed, the developments of the last few weeks are alarming and have immensely undermined the diplomatic efforts to defuse the situation. We condemn in the strongest terms the attempt made to assassinate Hennadiy Kernes, the Mayor of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, as well as the illegal detention of the military monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and their Ukrainian staff, which is a serious violation of the current agreement, and we demand their immediate release.

While we welcome the joint de-escalation measures agreed on in Geneva on 17 April and involving the main stakeholders as a step towards a tangible solution to the crisis, we are concerned about the fact that many of those measures have not been implemented. We urge all parties to implement their parts of the agreement, and especially to disarm all military groups and restore all seized buildings. The OSCE monitors must be allowed to play a role and to fulfil their mandate, as stipulated in the joint declaration.

In the meantime, Rwanda reiterates its call for respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We believe in the right to peaceful demonstration, but we firmly condemn the use of violence, the seizure of public buildings and the installation of illegal checkpoints by armed protesters. We therefore believe that Ukraine, like any other country, has a right to restore public order, provided that right is exercised in a proportionate manner. Nonetheless, the crisis in eastern Ukraine is not merely a matter of public order but a political issue that must be resolved through genuine dialogue with all Ukrainian parties, with a view to ensuring sustainable peace and equal rights for all, including the Russian-speaking minority.

To conclude, we reiterate our strong belief that while public meetings of the Council are important for its members to continue monitoring this crisis, the only way to solve the crisis in Ukraine is through the exercise of political will and the influence of all the countries and regional organizations involved, in order to ensure a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Feltman for his update on the difficult situation in Ukraine.

I am wondering, and I would also like to ask the Council, why we are having this meeting. Going over the difficult situation and the worsening of the crisis once again is undoubtedly one reason, although I know there are clear, decisive reasons behind the initiative of the United Kingdom to convene this meeting that brings

us all together. I also ask myself another question, not out of false piety but out of sincerity. It is the question Pope Francis asked a few days ago when he received Mr. Yatsenyuk — who has not sped up hatred and violence — and gave him a pen with which he might sign a peace.

Are we acting in the Council to help overcome misunderstandings? I am certain that we are. It is for that reason that today my country will merely reaffirm two convictions. That is, that in the dialogue of constructive diplomacy that was initiated on 17 April with a view to finding a peaceful and political solution to this critical situation, Russia, the United States, the European Union and Ukraine all expressed at Geneva a willingness to reach an agreement. What we saw as willingness to agree, the whole world saw as a source of hope.

Today, however, we must urge the parties to return to a constructive dialogue. The difficult situation facing Ukraine cannot be resolved through unilateral actions of any sort. It is essential that we strictly abide by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and not intervene in matters under the domestic jurisdiction of States in any way, including military, political and economic. We have already said that, and we have not come here to repeat things. We have come to say that it is understandable that the Council is meeting today.

The other reason we are here is to reject violence involving two concrete events, namely, the attack against the Mayor of Kharkiv, in eastern Ukraine, and, as requested by the Secretary-General, Argentina calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the military observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe who are being held hostage.

Again we reiterate that the Council meets in order to promote peace. With a pen in hand and with our good faith, we stand ready to help Ukraine emerge from this difficult situation so that it can achieve the peace that its people deserve.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

On 17 April, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United States issued the Geneva joint statement to de-escalate the crisis that brings us together this evening. That statement outlined a series of concrete steps to end the violence, halt provocative actions and protect the rights and security of all Ukrainian citizens. As Secretary Kerry said on 17 April,

> "All of this, we are convinced, represents a good day's work. The day's work has produced principles and it has produced commitments and it has produced words on paper. And we are the first to understand and to agree that words on paper will only mean what the actions that are taken as a result of those words produce."

Secretary Kerry also commended Foreign Minister Lavrov and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister for their cooperation in achieving that hard-negotiated agreement. It was a moment of hope. Since then, the Government of Ukraine has been implementing its commitments in good faith. Regrettably, the same cannot be said of the Russian Federation.

As we meet, observers from the special monitoring mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are reporting that most of Ukraine, including eastern Ukraine, is peaceful. The exceptions are in such areas as Donetsk, Luhansk and Sloviansk, where pro-Russian separatists continue to occupy buildings and attack local officials. There we have seen a sharp deterioration in law and order.

Just today, pro-Russian separatists armed with baseball bats, stormed the Government buildings in Luhansk, seizing control of the centre of municipal activity in one of the largest cities in eastern Ukraine. That kind of thuggery mimics the seizures of police stations, city halls and other Government buildings in cities and towns in Donetsk oblast and surrounding areas.

In addition to occupying Government buildings, over the past two weeks, gunmen kidnapped a senior police officer in Luhansk. In Donetsk, pro-Russian thugs armed with baseball bats attacked peaceful participants at a pro-unity rally, seriously injuring at least 15. Also in Donetsk, pro-Russian groups continue to hold 17 buildings, including the regional television broadcasting centre.

In the city of Sloviansk, the mayor was kidnapped, as were several journalists. The separatists in that area now hold an estimated 40 hostages. Nearby, three bodies were recently pulled from a river, each showing unmistakable signs of physical abuse; one has been identified as a local politician, another as a 19 year-old pro-unity student activist. Yesterday, gunmen

reportedly chased members of the Sloviansk Roma community from their homes. Make no mistake: those are not peaceful protests. It is not an eastern Ukrainian spring. It is a well-orchestrated campaign, with external support, to destabilize the Ukrainian State.

Finally, as all the world knows, pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk have kidnapped and continue to hold seven international inspectors, openly declared as members of a Vienna document mission, along with their Ukrainian escorts. My Government joins with responsible Governments everywhere in condemning that unlawful act and in being outraged by the shameful exhibition before the media of those international public servants.

The Vienna document, agreed upon by all 57 participating States of the OSCE, has been a lasting source of cooperation and military transparency. We call, with others, for the immediate and unconditional release of the inspectors and their Ukrainian escorts and the immediate end to their mistreatment while in captivity. We also call upon Russia, as a signatory to the Vienna document, to help secure their release and to confirm publicly, even if belatedly, for the record that the abducted monitors were part of a legitimate mission on behalf of the international community.

Since 17 April, the Government of Ukraine has acted in good faith and with admirable restraint to fulfil its commitments. The Kyiv city hall and its surrounding area are now clear of all Maidan barricades and protestors. Over the Easter holiday, Ukraine voluntarily suspended its counter-terrorism initiative, choosing to de-escalate despite its fundamental right to provide security on its own territory and for its own people. Unlike the separatists, Ukraine has cooperated fully with the OSCE special monitoring mission and allowed its observers to operate in regions about which Moscow had voiced concerns regarding the treatment of ethnic Russians.

In addition, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk has publicly committed his Government to undertake far-reaching constitutional reforms that will strengthen the power of the regions. He has appealed personally to Russian-speaking Ukrainians, pledging to support special status for the Russian language and to protect those who use it. He announced legislation to grant amnesty to those who surrender arms.

All of that should be cause for optimism and hope. Tragically, what we have seen from Russia since 17 April is exactly what we saw from Russia prior to 17 April: more attempts to stir up trouble, more efforts to undermine the Government of Ukraine and statement after statement at odds with the facts. What we have not seen is a single positive step by Russia to fulfil its Geneva commitments.

Instead, Russian officials have refused to publicly call on the separatists to give up their weapons and relinquish their illegal control of Ukrainian Government buildings. In fact, Russia continues to fund, to coordinate and to fuel the heavily armed separatist movement. In addition, just outside of Ukraine's border, Russia has continued to engage in threatening troop movements that are designed not to calm tensions, but to embolden the separatists and to intimidate the Government.

In conclusion, I emphasize that the United States remains committed to supporting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and will continue to uphold the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. We continue to seek stability within a peaceful, democratic, inclusive and united Ukraine, especially in advance of the upcoming important elections.

We remain committed to a diplomatic process, but Russia seems committed to destabilization and fantastical justifications for its actions. The truth about what is happening in Ukraine should guide our discussion, because truth is the only foundation on which an equitable and lasting solution to this crisis can be based.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing.

The crisis in Ukraine is the result of a complex fabric of historical and contemporary factors. A political solution is the only way to end the crisis. To tackle the crisis at its roots, both the current situation and the historical facts must be considered, taking into account the legitimate rights, interests and demands of the various regions and ethnic communities of Ukraine and the legitimate concerns of all the parties concerned, with a view to achieving a balance of interests for all.

For some time now, various parties including China, have been vigorously engaged in mediation efforts and pushing for talks in order to ease the crisis in Ukraine. The Geneva agreement reached between Russia, the United States, the European Union and Ukraine calls for measures to de-escalate the Ukrainian situation, thereby sending a positive signal for a political solution

to the crisis. Regrettably, tensions in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine have worsened, with each side more vehemently accusing the other. Threats and sanctions have again replaced dialogue and negotiation.

China hopes that all parties concerned will keep in mind the broader picture of regional peace and stability, and the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups in Ukraine, maintain restraint, persevere in dialogue and consultations, effectively implement the agreement already reached by all of the parties and continue to push for a political solution to the crisis so as to achieve stability and development in Ukraine as soon as possible.

China's position on the question of Ukraine remains objective, impartial and responsible. From the very beginning, China has called on all parties to seek a political solution through dialogue rather than confrontation, and we support international mediation efforts conducive to de-escalating the situation and seeking a political solution. China will continue to play a constructive role in mediation efforts and pushing for talks.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned over the continuing tensions in eastern Ukraine. Despite the agreement reached in Geneva on 17 April, the situation in Ukraine is showing no signs of abating. We are troubled in particular by the continuing violence and aggressive provocations by illegal armed groups, including the seizure of key public buildings and the recent assassination attempt against the Mayor of the eastern city of Kharkiv.

All provocative actions and hostile rhetoric aimed at destabilizing Ukraine must cease immediately. As agreed in the Geneva statement, all illegal armed groups must be disarmed and all illegally seized key public buildings vacated.

We strongly condemn the detention of military monitors of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as of Ukrainian staff by illegal armed groups. It should be noted that the OSCE monitoring mechanism is an indispensable tool for implementing the Geneva statement. It is unacceptable to target international observers who are working to de-escalate the volatile situation. They must be released immediately and unconditionally. The safety and security of all international personnel must be fully guaranteed by all actors on the ground.

In the light of the ongoing situation in Ukraine, we reiterate that constructive dialogue among all concerned parties will be the only way to achieve a peaceful solution. In that regard, we call for all parties to the Geneva statement to implement their commitments. As Ukraine moves towards critical elections in May, it is all the more important to ensure the holding of fair and free elections in the country, without any intervention or influence by outside forces. We hope that the Ukrainian Government will lead an inclusive and transparent constitutional process.

We once again reaffirm our full support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing on the developments concerning Ukraine. We share his assessment that the situation in eastern Ukraine is deteriorating alarmingly, especially in Kharkiv, Luhansk and in the Donetsk area. We are deeply concerned by the actions of the pro-Russian separatist militias backed by Russia, aimed at destabilizing eastern Ukraine and, it seems, preventing the holding of the presidential elections on 25 May.

These destabilizing actions have intensified again in recent days, with the proliferation of the illegal occupation of public buildings, an increasing number of attacks against the Ukrainian security forces and an increase in violence against the local population. As others have already mentioned, just yesterday peaceful demonstrators in favour of the unity of the Ukraine were violently attacked by armed pro-Russian gangs armed with clubs and baseball bats in the city of Donetsk. Today hundreds of pro-Russian demonstrators seized the building of the regional administration and the prosecutor's office in the city of Luhansk, and stormed the police station.

We condemn those actions and the attacks targeting political figures in the strongest terms. The torture and murder of the Horlivka city councillor, Volodymyr Rybak, whose remains were found last week near Sloviansk together with those of a young student from Kyiv, Yuriy Popravko, attest to the high level of violence. Yesterday, the mayor of Kharkiv, Henadiy Kernes, was the target of an assassination attempt — there are differing interpretations with regard to the party responsible. These crimes must be

investigated and everything possible must be done to prevent similar cases in the future.

The violence of recent days shows once again the need to urgently de-escalate the situation. We welcome the positive steps taken by Ukraine to fulfil the commitments set out in the Geneva statement adopted on 17 April by Ukraine, Russia, the European Union and the United States. The Ukrainian Government has proposed an amnesty for those who leave the buildings they occupy in eastern Ukraine, as long as they have not committed crimes. It is ready to launch an inclusive national dialogue on constitutional reform and decentralization, and has acted with restraint in response to the actions of armed militias in the east.

The international community expects Russia, for its part, to take concrete steps to bring the separatists in eastern Ukraine to de-escalate in accordance with the commitments undertaken in the Geneva statement. We expect Russia to use its influence over the separatist movements to convince them to seek dialogue with the Ukrainian Government instead of fighting. Russia should publicly condemn the actions of the separatists aimed at destabilizing Ukraine and call on armed militants to leave the illegally occupied buildings. Finally, the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Ukrainian border is an essential step for de-escalating tensions, especially in eastern Ukraine.

We strongly condemn the kidnapping near the town of Sloviansk on 25 April of a team of military inspectors deployed under the 2011 Vienna document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We also condemn the temporary detention, on 27 April, of two members of the OSCE special monitoring mission in Yenakiyeve. The safety of international observers deployed anywhere in Ukraine must be ensured by all parties. The OSCE monitoring mission must be able to fulfil its role in the implementation of the Geneva statement.

We call on Russia to continue to use all of its influence on the pro-Russian separatists to encourage them to release unconditionally and promptly the seven inspectors from OSCE participating States that they have been holding hostage in Sloviansk for the past four days, as well as the Ukrainian personnel accompanying them.

We also condemn the restrictions on media freedom and on the freedom of expression. The detention and intimidation of journalists have increased over the past two weeks in the east of the country. The day before yesterday, pro-Russian separatists took control of the regional public television station in Donetsk. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, has repeatedly warned against misinformation and propaganda. I would like to join her appeal and highlight that any limitations on the freedom of the press is unacceptable.

Nothing can take the place of direct, substantive dialogue between Kyiv and Moscow to find a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis. The crisis continues to worsen. It will have harmful consequences for the entire region, Europe and beyond. The Geneva declaration of 17 April cannot remain a dead letter. The alternative to dialogue and to de-escalation would have incalculable consequences for international peace and security.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, for his briefing and to express our grave concern over the deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine.

Jordan would like to reaffirm Ukraine's right to protect its territorial integrity and sovereignty and its citizens from threats by the rebels in eastern Ukraine. That is a right that is enshrined in international law. What is happening in eastern Ukraine at the hand of the rebels is a breach of law. The occupation of buildings and installations by means of armed force and the threat to the lives and security of people is not a peaceful expression of opinion. If those committing those acts believe that their claims are legitimate, their resort to force removes any legitimacy from their actions.

Jordan would like to call for the immediate release of the hostages detained by the rebels in Sloviansk, in eastern Ukraine, including the monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We call on the parties concerned to implement the agreement concluded in Geneva on 17 April and to bring pressure to bear on the rebels to disarm, withdraw from the installations and buildings they occupy and immediately cease, together with all parties and actors in eastern Ukraine, from discriminatory and hate speech.

We call upon the Ukrainian authorities to work for a peaceful solution to the crisis, to abide by international norms in dealing with the mutiny and to respect the relevant human rights laws and principles.

We note the announcement by the Government of Ukraine accepting the competence of the International

Criminal Court over the events that occurred from November 2013 to 22 February 2014. That indicates the readiness of the Ukrainian authorities to respect international sanctions criteria and the primacy of international law.

We call on all the parties concerned to push for the restoration of stability and security in eastern Ukraine and to assist the Ukrainian authorities in implementing a successful political transition process and beginning a comprehensive dialogue with all linguistic groups and communities. We stress the importance of the holding of the presidential elections as scheduled in May 2014.

Mr. Barros (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Feltman and the convening of this meeting at this delicate moment for Ukraine and the region.

Since the last time the Council met to discuss the situation in Ukraine (see S/PV.7157), the crisis has intensified in the eastern area of the country, in particular in Donetsk, Sloviansk, Kharkiv and Luhansk, owing to the acts of violence committed by separatist groups.

Chile would like to express its serious concern regarding the grave and even fatal consequences of the escalation of the crisis. In that respect, we condemn the kidnapping of the military monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Ukrainian security staff in Sloviansk. We call for their physical and psychological health to be preserved and for their immediate and unconditional release.

It is essential that the Council contribute to promoting maximum restraint and moderation by the parties, and we call upon all those with influence on the parties to take actions aimed at stopping the crisis. It is urgent that tensions be reduced and that we return to the spirit of compromise evidenced in the Geneva talks on 17 April, which led to the joint statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Russia and Ukraine, the Secretary of State of the United States and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union. That statement listed concrete steps that Chile believes to be essential to reducing tensions and restoring security for all citizens, including abstaining from violence and intimidation, disarming the armed groups and vacating the illegally occupied buildings, among other things. We also believe that it is equally important that a broad and transparent constitutional process be launched, leading to the immediate establishment of an inclusive national dialogue.

We reiterate again the need to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Furthermore, we reiterate the obligation of Member States to abstain from resorting to the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State.

Once again, we call for the parties to find a peaceful solution to the crisis through direct political dialogue, abstain from taking unilateral measures and support the international mediation initiatives, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/262. That process should be inclusive and ensure respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and full respect for the rights of minorities.

I would like conclude by expressing my appreciation for the good offices of the Secretary-General and by underscoring the work of the United Nations human rights monitoring group for Ukraine and of the OSCE aimed at establishing the facts, reducing tensions and helping to create a climate conducive to the holding of presidential elections on 25 May.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing and his warning to the Council. Australia strongly supported calls for the holding of tonight's briefing to give the Council an up-to-date sense of the continuing destabilization and increased tensions in eastern Ukraine, much of which has evidently been sponsored and condoned by the Russian Federation.

We, with the rest of the Council, welcomed the 17 April agreement reached in Geneva on steps to de-escalate the crisis, including commitments to refrain from further acts of violence and provocation. That was a positive development and, we hoped, a demonstration of serious commitment to reduce tensions and work cooperatively towards a diplomatic and political solution to the crisis.

Ukraine is living up to its Geneva commitments. It has submitted to Parliament a draft law on amnesty for protesters who surrender their weapons. It has initiated a process of constitutional reform aimed at decentralizing power. It has committed to holding a broad public debate on possible constitutional changes and sought proposals for constitutional reform. It is working to disarm radical movements. The Ukrainian

Government has also said that it will guarantee the rights of Russian speakers to use their own language. It has strongly condemned xenophobia, intolerance and anti-Semitism and begun an investigation into the distribution of anti-Semitic leaflets in Donetsk. It has invited all political groups to discuss ways to resolve the crisis in eastern Ukraine and it has supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in its work to de-escalate tensions.

But what has Russian done since 17 April to honour its Geneva commitments? Disappointingly, all evidence at hand points to Russia's continued determination to promote instability and challenge Ukraine's authority over its sovereign territory. Russia's claims that it has no agency in or influence over the actions of armed militia groups operating in eastern Ukraine are not credible. The seizure of OSCE observers on 25 April in Sloviansk and their mistreatment and their continued detention is a deplorable and cynical act against impartial international personnel working to bring peace and stability to the region, an act clearly intended to impede the ability of all OSCE monitors to work in eastern Ukraine. We call for their immediate release.

We have also witnessed continued and extreme provocations, including military manoeuvres on the Russian side of the Ukrainian border and reported multiple violations of Ukrainian air space by Russian military aircraft. We have witnessed the deplorable shooting on 28 April of the Mayor of Kharkiv and the abduction and killing of a Horlivka City Council representative. We are seeing continued occupation of Government buildings by well-armed and coordinated paramilitary groups, including, today, the occupation of Government buildings in Lugansk. We are seeing the increasing intimidation of local populations and illegal detentions. Under-Secretary-General Feltman has just reported to us increasing reports of violence, with people killed, wounded, beaten and tortured.

In those circumstances, it is appropriate and necessary for the Ukrainian Government itself to take measures to try to ensure security and protect its citizens in its own territory. It has shown considerable restraint in the face of extreme provocation, but it has a right to enforce the rule of law and respond in a manner proportionate to the circumstances.

We welcome Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Lubkivsky's statement during his 25 April press conference at the United Nations that Ukraine would protect its people from provocation in a civilized manner so as to avoid bloodshed. We welcome Ukraine's recent acceptance of jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) with respect to crimes committed in its territory from November last year to February 2014. We urge Ukraine to extend the ICC's jurisdiction to crimes committed beyond that date and to accede to the ICC Statute.

For its part, overwhelmingly, the international community remains united in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territory integrity and in its position that Russia cease its illegal intervention, interference and provocative actions in Ukraine. Statements by other Security Council members tonight are further confirmation of that.

To conclude, Australia continues to call on Russia to meet its Geneva commitments, to allow Ukraine's elections on 25 May to proceed without interference or obstruction, which is the right of every sovereign nation, and to exercise its influence over separatist activists in Ukraine towards those ends. The crisis remains very dangerously poised. Active, genuine and immediate efforts by Russia to defuse it are imperative.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The recent events in south-eastern Ukraine and the country as a whole are of the most serious concern. The Kyiv regime, spurred on by Western well-wishers, are stubbornly pushing the country to disaster. Today, Western colleagues have spoken many critical words regarding the activities of protesters in south-eastern Ukraine. If our Western colleagues had actually demonstrated a tenth of that commitment to maintaining order during the events at the Maidan then perhaps the current crisis could have been prevented.

On 17 April in Geneva, agreement was reached that all sides should refrain from any types of violence, intimidation or provocation. However, in just a matter of days, there was a resumption of the so-called counter-terrorist, but actually punitive, operations — out and out violations of that agreement. In the south-east, there was a deployment of roughly 15,000 military personnel, tanks, armed vehicles, artillery, aircraft and subdivisions of Right Sector Banderists. As the first attempts to bring military pressure to bear on the south-east led to the defection of some Ukrainian military to the side of the protesters, today the sub-units are staffed by those from the west of the country. One might wonder what political and psychological effect that has had on the south-east and how it ties in with the task of ensuring the territorial integrity of the country.

In Geneva, it seemed that there was a window of opportunity for a significant de-escalation of the situation in Ukraine at the beginning of broad national dialogue. However, almost immediately following the declarations and actions of the Kyiv Government authorities, it became clear that they had no intention of implementing the agreement, just as they did not intend to implement the agreement of 21 February. In both cases, that treachery led to bloodshed. Unfortunately, it is difficulty to speak of confidence in the current coalition in Kyiv when the defence and law-enforcement agencies are essentially controlled by the Svoboda Party, whose political platform is based on declarations issued by Nazi collaborators in June 1941. Pursuant to those declarations, real Ukrainians should have collaborated with Hitler to establish a new order in Europe. I would recall that the collaborators and the followers of Bandera killed not only Jews, Poles and Soviet soldiers but also Ukrainians who refused to subscribe to their sloganeering.

In Geneva, there was agreement on the need for a full rejection of extremism. However, the Right Sector Banderists, instead of laying down their weapons, headed to the east of Ukraine. As was declared, the Banderist army crossed the Dnepr. Neither the Right Sector with its Nazi slogans nor any other radical organizations have laid down their arms. On the contrary, those groups have become legal. They are forming military battalions with names like Dnepr and Donbass in their ranks. How could the militias in the east be convinced to disarm or vacate buildings if they have been surrounded, as has happened in Sloviansk, by subdivisions of the Ukrainian armed forces and the so-called National Guard, comprised of fighters from the Right Sector.

In Geneva, there was agreement that there had to be a single approach to all illicit activities in Ukraine from whichever side they might emanate — that is, from Kyiv, the west, the east or the south. However, the Maidan remains occupied — cement blockades are still in place — as are several buildings in Kyiv. No one has liberated anything in Kyiv. In Washington, D.C., they are saying, uncritically, that the buildings have been legally rented. But by whom? They have been rented by armed fighters.

In Geneva, there was agreement that there should be amnesty for protestors. However, instead of that, the People's Governor of Donetsk, Pavel Gubarev, who never had weapons in his hand, remains in prison. He is a political prisoner, arrested just because he called for a referendum on the federalization of Ukraine. The monitors of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) confirm that he was tortured and that he is now engaged in an indefinite hunger strike. Mr. Gubarev is far from being the only political prisoner of the Kyiv regime. One can speak of widespread witch hunts for those who have dared to express their disagreement with the Government in the Maidan. According to our sources, in the Donetsk region there are already about 10 cases of politically motivated kidnappings of people who were later transported to Kyiv by the special services.

On 28 April, there was an attack on the life of the popular mayor of Kharkiv, Hennadiy Kernes. My colleague from the United Kingdom rushed to say that the protesters in the south-east participated in that crime. That demands a careful investigation of the case. Let us not try to prejudge the outcome. It is true that Mr. Kernes had indeed spoken out about the chaos in other regions of Ukraine, and there were serious political battles between him and one of the heads of the defence and law-enforcement agencies. On the same day — 28 April — at the Kherson airport, the presidential candidate's plane was blocked. He had been travelling as part of the presidential campaign. He was attacked. In early April another candidate, Oleh Tsarev, was severely beaten. He was the only candidate for the presidential election without State protection. Mr. Tsarev was stripped of his right to participate in the televised debates. In that context, can we speak about the peaceful nature of the electoral campaign in Ukraine and of freedom of expression for its civilians?

The key point of the Geneva agreement was broad national dialogue, which was to take into account the interests of all regions and political formations. The Kyiv Government made certain promises with regard to constitutional reforms and upholding the rights of minorities. But what about national dialogue and reform? According to meadia reports, today Mr. Yatsenyuk submitted to the Rada some sort of draft constitution. It is not really clear how it was prepared. What is certain is that it was not an open and inclusive process. In fact, the Party of Regions, which represents the rest of the east of the country, was excluded from the process. It is no surprise that the draft was immediately criticized in the Rada by all sides. We did not hear any reasonable answers to key questions, such as how the federalization or decentralization of the country would

take place. It seems such things are to be substituted by some type of broadening of municipalities. How is the issue of the status of the Russian language to be resolved?

Can anyone seriously assert that all those activities by Kyiv are a solution to the political crisis aimed at stabilizing Ukraine? Instead of genuine collective work to bring Ukraine out of the crisis, which was brought about by political misadventurism, our colleagues from the United States and the European Union have preferred to make strong insinuations against Russia and thinking up some sort of sanctions that are pointless and counterproductive. Perhaps they are satisfactory to some one, but the responsibility for the future of Ukraine, Europe and the world is not being considered — at least not by these people.

The result is that the Government in Kyiv has done nothing to implement the Geneva document. Our Western colleagues, first and foremost our American colleagues, which have an unprecedented impact on the situation in Kyiv, do not want, or have not been able, to convince the Government to uphold its obligations under the document. They must clearly understand the scope of their responsibility if the situation in Ukraine continues to deteriorate.

It is very difficult for us in Russia to see the chaos in such a close, fraternal country. But we understand the reason that brought about the protests in the east and south. People do not want a repeat of the Kyiv scenario. They do not recognize the legitimacy of the Kyiv Government, which is made up of oligarchs. They have decided to create their own governing bodies. In response, they have been accused of terrorism and punished by military operations.

We call upon the Kyiv regime and its Western sponsors to think twice. There is a need to lift the order on using arms against civilians, as well as to free the political prisoners and disarm the Right Sector. A full constitutional process must take place, including representatives from all regions. We hope that the OSCE mission, headed by Mr. Apakan, which plays a particular role in the implementation of the Geneva agreement, will provide the Kyiv Government with assistance in establishing national dialogue and seeking understanding with the people in the south-east. However, the most important work to de-escalate should be done by the Kyiv Government — as they call themselves.

I should now like to say a few words with regard to the issues touched on by colleagues.

On the OSCE monitors in Sloviansk, they were requested by the Kyiv Government, and as such were responsible for their security. How can people be sent on a bus to an area controlled by self-defence forces, without even providing documents that would confirm their status? That was either a provocation by the Kyiv Government or just simple stupidity. We are doing everything we can for the freeing of those prisoners, and one has already been released due to health reasons.

With regard to armed forces, our armed forces are on Russian territory. American forces are hardly at home. They are in Australia, Lithuania, Poland and on the Black Sea, where an American vessel has remained longer than it was invited to do. Yes, our troops do conduct training exercises. But they do so in a transparent manner and while upholding all existing international agreements. We do not have any aggressive intentions towards Ukraine. They Kyiv Government should keep a cool head and not engage in reckless activities with respect to the people in the south-east of the country, where there are many Russian citizens as well.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Let me thank the Nigerian presidency for convening this open meeting, which does not cease to surprise us, judging by some of the statements we have heard. I might refer to some of the comments by our colleague from the Russian Federation. I would also like to thank Under Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing.

As so many of us have said here, the international community had placed high hopes on international mediation and monitoring efforts and on the 17 April Geneva statement on Ukraine. But, as we know today, the Geneva statement is just another document to be signed and discarded by Russia, adding to the growing list of breaches of Russia's international commitments, such as the Helsinki Final Act, the 1991 Almaty Declaration, the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and Ukraine of 1997 and the Charter of the United Nations itself.

Despite growing provocations, the Ukrainian authorities have taken a number of concrete steps to follow up on the Geneva statement. Barricades in Maidan Square are being dismantled. I recall my French colleague referring a number of times to the Internet and Google. Users of those will see that there

is a significant difference in terms of what is happening on the streets of Kyiv. As I said, barricades are being dismantled. The Kiyv city administration building has re-opened, as has the main thoroughfare of the city, Khreschatik.

Important proposals regarding the status of the Russian language, amnesty, greater rights for the regions, as well as limitations on the President's power, have been put forward by the transitional Governmet. Indeed, as Ambassador Churkin referred to earlier today, constitutional reform was being discussed by the Parliament in a public session accessible to all. There has been a major debate on what was being proposed. But, again, a major debate that includes criticism is a sign of democracy. Unanimous decisions and acceptance of whatever is put on the table is something that abelongs to regimes, not democratic Governments. We therefore welcome the discussion. It is necessary and it is something Kyiv has to do, and should be doing actively while involving all the regions and populations, because it affects the lives of the entire population of Ukraine.

Other issues discussed today include decentralization, constitutional reform, checks and balances, the powers of the President in the future, a stronger role for and the reinforcement of the independence of the judiciary, and so forth. Preparations are taking place for the national elections to be held on 25 May.

In a stark contrast to those efforts, armed separatists, aidead and abetted by Russia, are continuing their assault on Ukraine, adding violence to force and lawlessness to impunity. As many noted earlier, yesterday and today saw more violent attacks in the city of Luhansk and elsewhere — in Mykolaiv and in Konstiantynivka — where men armed with clubs and metal bars smashed windows and doors. A pro-unity rally was attacked by men in military fatigues, leading to over a dozen injuries among pro-Ukrainian protesters. A few days ago, a Ukrainian helicopter was downed by a rocket-propelled grenade, hardly a weapon so-called peaceful protesters — as labelled by the Russian side — can buy at the local corner market. That certainly does not sound like the implementation of Geneva agreement by the separatists and their state sponsors?

Displays of brutal force, beatings, disappearances, torture, killings and hostage-taking have become a daily reality in eastern Ukraine under militant separatist rule. While quick to condemn and brand Ukrainian authorities for alleged crimes, Russia has yet to issue a single condemnation of the violence carried out by armed separatists. The legitimate right of Ukraine, to which our Australian colleague has referred, to defend its territory and its State has been exercised with incredible restraint and caution, although portrayed by the Russian propaganda machinery as a bloodbath and a valid cause for intervention.

From the speaker before me, we heard references to military punitive operations and acts. If what Ukraine is carrying out in the eastern part of its country is a military punitive action, it is probably the most invisible, impossible military action on Earth. Nothing has happened in that sense. To exaggerate to such an extent is going a long way in terms of exaggeration. On the other hand, in a threatening tone, Russia recently ordered Ukraine to withdraw Ukrainian troops stationed on Ukraine's own soil, or else — so much for respect for Ukraine's international sovereignty.

We firmly reject all of Russia's attempts to validate its intentions and threats to use armed forces or to send so-called Russian peacekeepers into Ukraine. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia should know better than to exploit the name of peacekeeping to cover up its aggressive expansionist aims.

Now I would like to turn to human rights and the media. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Mr. Dunja Mijatović, is sounding increasing alarm regarding the treatment of journalists and the deterioration of media freedom in eastern Ukraine. In areas under the control of pro-Russian militants, journalists are attacked, detained, harassed and their equipment taken or smashed. There is probably something to hide if there is such a distaste and dislike of free media in that part of Ukraine. We reiterate our call to end impunity for attacks against journalists. We also call for a thorough investigation of kidnappings, torture and killings, committed by whomever, and to insist that the perpetrators of all such acts be brought to justice.

We hope that the next report of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, to be issued in mid-May, will address the growing cases of human rights violations, violent deaths, causes for torture, abductions and activist disappearances in eastern Ukraine. We also hope the report will look into the human rights situation in occupied Crimea. As

has been reported, the Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev has been barred from returning home to Crimea. A group of camouflage-clad men stormed the Tatar Assembly offices and tore down the Ukrainian flag there. The director and editor of Crimean Tatar programmes on Crimean State television have been forced out by local authorities because they had spoken against increasing censorship.

A new level of banditry by the separatists in eastern Ukraine was reached on 25 April, when they kidnapped a group of OSCE representatives. Notably, when asked to release the hostages, the separatists were quoted as saying that they needed to speak to the competent authorities in the Russian Federation. My delegation strongly condemns the kidnapping of unarmed OSCE military verification mission observers and Ukrainian security personnel. Such acts, as well as the public parading of the hostages, speak loudly to the true character and intentions of the separatists, who seek to disrupt international observation so that they can continue attacking Ukraine out of sight of the international community.

The parties with influence on the militant separatists, first and foremost Russia, must take all necessary steps to bring about the immediate release of all hostages, without preconditions. The international monitoring and mediation efforts of the United Nations, OSCE and other regional bodies must be fully supported, guaranteed safety and security, and allowed full freedom of access on all of Ukraine's territory.

As Ukraine prepares for the 25 May nation-wide elections, those opposed to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are at it again. To quote the self-proclaimed people's mayor of Sloviansk, Vyacheslav Ponomarev, "We will take all necessary measures so that elections do not take place in the south-east". When asked what they would be ready to do, he said: "We will take somebody hostage and hang them up by the balls. It is real, you understand?"

The intent here could not be more clear — it is to prevent Ukraine's return to normality. We all understand that there are legitimate complaints in south-eastern Ukraine, borne out of decades of mismanagement and corruption and misrule, including the rule of the previous President, Yanukovych, who fled the country in disgrace. It is time for the current Government to start seriously addressing issues of socioeconomic development because a lot of that discontent is based on the socioeconomic concerns of the population. Once those issues are addressed, the level of so-called separatism, I am sure, will diminish. That should not happen, according to some, because it would go against the scenario.

My Government condemns the actions of armed separatists and their external sponsors, aimed at further undermining and threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The onus is now on Russia to stop interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs and fomenting unrest in Ukraine, and to abandon its threats of the use of force. Ukraine is doing its part to implement the Geneva agreement on Ukraine. It is time for Russia to live up to its own commitments and to reclaim respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Feltman, for his briefing.

Chad, like other Member States, is extremely concerned by the deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine. Following a period of relative calm following the Geneva declaration, we are today faced with new circumstances, marked by the kidnapping of members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission, the attempted assassination of the mayor of Kharkiv, and the occupation of public buildings in Lugansk and elsewhere by pro-Russian elements. Chad condemns those violent acts, which undermine the negotiation and reconciliation efforts in Ukraine. Chad calls for the release of the hostages and for all parties to be calm and restrained.

Given the serious situation Chad reiterates its appeal to those countries with influence over the parties to use every possible means at their disposal to give initiate dialogue between them. We are convinced that the solution to the problem in Ukraine can only be political. It should be sought with respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Ukraine, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations. To that end, we urge the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to redouble their efforts to pursue mediation so as to bring the two sides closer together in seeking a peaceful solution in full respect for human rights and particularly for the rights minorities in Ukraine.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I want to join other Council members in thanking Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Feltman, for his update on the situation in Ukraine.

The situation in Ukraine remains tense, and the risk of further escalation remains a matter of grave concern to the international community. Utmost care needs to be taken to ensure that the crisis does not degenerate into a civil war. If it does, it might become an internationalized conflict, with attendant reverberations everywhere. We followed with keen interest the talks held about two weeks ago in Geneva between Ukraine, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation.

At the meeting, they agreed on initial concrete steps to de-escalate tensions and restore security for all citizens. It was decided that all sides must refrain from violence, intimidation and provocative actions. The meeting specifically called for the disarmament of all illegal armed groups and the return of all illegally seized buildings to the legitimate owners. Significantly, it was agreed that protesters who laid down their arms and vacated the buildings they occupied would be granted amnesty.

We believe that the agreement reached in Geneva constitutes the basis for the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. That scenario offered a glimmer of hope, as Under-Secretary-General Feltman has aptly characterized it. That glimmer of hope, I am afraid, is fast fading before our eyes. Armed men continue to occupy buildings in cities across eastern Ukraine, and the level of violence is escalating. The capture and detention of monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who are designated and expected to play a leading role in implementing the de-escalation measures agreed on at the Geneva talks is, in our view, an affront to the international community. We support the position of the Secretary-General that international missions working in Ukraine must be allowed to perform their duties unimpeded. We call for the immediate release of the OSCE monitors and urge those with influence in the capitals to use it to that end.

As in every conflict, the way forward to lasting peace, security and stability in Ukraine lies in dialogue between all the parties concerned. The alternative of a military option would only bleed Ukraine's already open veins. We believe that the Geneva agreement provides a strong surgical procedure that can mend those veins. The clock is ticking. Ukraine is the patient. The Security Council and the international community constitute the surgical team. Let us stabilize and restore the patient to health, or many more may bleed. That is our collective responsibility.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I thank you for convening this meeting, Madam President, and for the opportunity to address the Security Council. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing, and all the members of the Council for their statement.

It has been a month since Russia illegally occupied and annexed Crimea, using its military forces and brutally violating international law. Unfortunately, Russia has not stopped there, and apparently its leaders are now targeting other parts of Ukraine and brazenly interfering in its internal affairs. The agreements reached at the Geneva meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the United States and the European Union on 17 April provided a faint beam of hope for a diplomatic solution.

In order to implement the Geneva statement for the de-escalation of the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine, the Government of Ukraine immediately took the necessary practical steps. Within just one week, the Government suspended the active phase of its anti-terrorist operation, whose main objective was the restoration of law and order and the protection of civilians. It initiated constitutional reform. It approved the concept of local administrative reform, whose main principles are decentralizing power in the country, significantly empowering local communities and improving management at the regional and district levels. A draft law on amnesty for participants in the uprisings in the eastern regions has been prepared and would apply to those protesters who surrender their weapons and evacuate illegally seized administrative buildings, except for those suspected of committing serious crimes. The parliamentary coalition has invited all political parties represented in the Ukrainian Parliament to sign a memorandum of understanding on ways to resolve the situation in eastern Ukraine. The Minister of Internal Affairs and Security Services has continued implementing a nationwide campaign to seize illegal arms from the population, and more than 6,000 weapons have been handed over recently. Ukraine is demonstrating its commitment to constructive

cooperation with human-rights institutions and international organizations.

What has Russia done for its part of the Geneva document? It has done nothing. Because of the lack of support for the separatists among the population of eastern Ukraine, Russia is seeking new ways to destabilize the situation in the region, preparing and carrying out numerous armed provocations through its agents. Russian-sponsored illegal paramilitary units have continued to destabilize the situation in eastern Ukraine, preparing the ground for a new stage of military aggression. The Russian leadership has done nothing to publicly dissociate itself from the armed separatists and provocateurs or to urge them to immediately lay down their arms and release captured administrative buildings. Russia has not even condemned the seizure of hostages, including journalists, or separatists' open acts of xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Any attempts by Russia to show that the Ukrainian Government is trying to use force against the peaceful Ukrainian population are lies.

Our Government respects freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, which are guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine. However, when heavily armed, professionally trained groups led by Russian military seize law-enforcement facilities and administrative offices, kill Ukrainian police officers and take hostages, they are operating like terrorists and must be treated accordingly. Ukrainian counter-terrorism operations are targeted exclusively at illegal armed groups threatening civilians. Meanwhile, the Russian-controlled army groups are in fact holding the entire civilian population of several towns in the eastern region hostage and have thus transgressed the bounds of humanity.

I will list some facts. Three Ukrainian law-enforcement officers were abducted, brutally beaten, tortured and later presented to the Russian media as Ukrainian spies, blindfolded and with their hands tied. Ukrainian and foreign journalists are being systematically kidnapped, while Russian journalists are allowed to operate in the areas controlled by the illegal armed groups. A military helicopter was destroyed with a man-portable air defence (MANPAD) guided missile. It should be understood that peaceful protesters cannot buy MANPADs in shops. Representatives of the military verification mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were taken hostage in Sloviansk. The detention by force of international observers is yet another testament to the criminal and terrorist nature of the separatist armed groups. In contrast to the demand voiced in many of the statements in the Council today that those hostages be released, the Russian Federation, as might be expected, made no such demand; nor have its leaders in Moscow.

What is important is that the leaders of the illegal armed groups have publicly admitted responsibility for all the aforementioned crimes — even on television. Many members of the illegal militant groups are citizens of the Russian Federation, and they are not even trying to hide it, publicly displaying their identification. We recently read an article in *The New York Times* in which the Kuban Cossack Mozhaev declared his presence and that of an armed group from his region, which we had noticed in Crimea as well.

Ukrainian law-enforcement agencies have credible evidence of these persons' involvement in serious crimes. Today, some of those crimes have been described. Among them was the brutal story of Volodymyr Rybak, a member of Horlivka's City Council, and Yuriy Popravko, a 19-year-old activist from Kyiv, who were martyred by members of terrorist groups. Their bodies, mutilated by torture, were found in the Torets River in the vicinity of Sloviansk. Volodymyr Rybak disappeared on 17 April in Horlivka after he tried to remove the separatists' flag from the building of Horlivka City Council. A video of the kidnapping, as well as audio recordings of phone conversations intercepted by Ukraine's Security Service, provided sufficient proof that terrorist leaders, notably the self-proclaimed mayor of Sloviansk, Vyacheslav Ponomaryov, and the military commander of the terrorists, the Russian agent Igor Strelkov, were involved in the murder. The true identity of the Russian agent has been established as Colonel Igor Girkin of Russian military intelligence, who is registered as a permanent resident of Moscow.

The Government of Ukraine strongly condemns the aforementioned acts of terror and violence, including yesterday's attempt to assassinate the Mayor of Kharkiv, Hennadiy Kernes, who publicly supported the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Unfortunately, Russia has not even publicly condemned or dissociated itself from those acts of terror and violence perpetrated by illegal militants since the Geneva agreement. I would like to remind the Council that Russia used to deny that its armed forces participated in the occupation of Crimea. However, President Putin now openly admits the use of Russian military forces and praises

them for their heroism and the successful completion of the operation aimed at the reunification of Crimea with Russia. They have even issued a special medal of honour. And now, in spite of numerous irrefutable facts concerning Russian military involvement in organizing and guiding illegal armed groups in eastern Ukraine, Moscow denies any Russian military participation just as hard.

Furthermore, Russia is now threatening to use force, as demonstrated by its concentration of armed forces directly on the eastern border of our country. The number of units along Ukraine's borders has increased. Last week, we all heard intensified militaristic rhetoric from senior Russian officials, including President Putin, Minister Lavrov and Minister Shoigu, threatening to send Russian troops into the territory of Ukrain under various pretexts. Defence Minister Shoigu reported the start of new military exercises by battalion tactical groups from the southern and western military districts of the Russian armed forces in connection with "the deteriorating situation in southeastern Ukraine". With that the Russian side has in fact confirmed that its military activity near the Ukrainian border in the past month has not been routine in nature, but directly related to the developments in Ukraine. Unfortunately, the withdrawal of troops announced by Minister Shoigu yesterday has not come true. We still observe those troops near our borders.

My British colleague has given us information about the strange statement by our Russian partner here, who said that, in case of events taking a bad turn in Ukraine's south-east, Russia would remember the provision to use armed forces in Ukraine given to President Vladimir Putin by the Federation Council. He also said that Russia had an international legal basis for sending its peacekeeping troops into Ukraine. And he referred to the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which Russia used during the conflict in the Caucasus in 2008. The right to self-defence on the territory of another country? Let me remind him that Ukraine has never threatened Russia, and never will. Ukrainians want to live in peace and to be left alone. The highest level of cynicism is the Russian reference to the right of self-defence in a situation in which it is Russia that is acting as aggressor, having occupied Crimea, as is brutally interfering in the internal affairs of Ukraine, destabilizing it and trying to create an explosive situation in the eastern regions.

Unfortunately, we are deeply concerned that the scenario that is prepared for eastern Ukraine might be similar to the one implemented by Russia in Abkhazia. That scenario might include several steps.

Step one: a small group of local separatists, supported by Russian-controlled armed groups, would seize control over regional councils and make them illegally proclaim the creation of a so-called independent Novorossiya within the boundaries described by President Putin at his recent press interview. We have already seen that step taken in Donetsk, Slovansk and Kharkiv, against the will of the vast majority of the local population and against the Ukrainian Constitution.

Step two: the Russian Federation would immediately recognize such a regional unit as an independent State.

Step three: upon a request from the newly self-proclaimed authorities, the Russian Federation would send its troops to Ukraine under the guise of peacekeepers or collective self-defence.

Unfortunately, I must say that such a scenario is realistic, as it has been reported that some Russian heavy military vehicles had been spotted near Ukraine's borders bearing signs indicating "Peacekeeping Mission" in the Russian and Ukrainian languages, exactly as happened in Abkhazia. One of the main purposes of that scenario is to disrupt the presidential elections scheduled for 25 May, which are a top priority for the Government and for the people of Ukraine.

Let me sum up my statement by making some short conclusions. Twelve days have already passed since the Geneva meeting. Ukraine has done its utmost to de-escalate the situation. Our steps have been acknowledged and supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other parties involved. Russia has done nothing.

How should the problem be solved? The answer is simple: Russia has to implement the Geneva agreements. First, Russia should withdraw its army from Ukraine's borders. Secondly, it should make a high-level statement calling on its protégés to free all hostages, to disarm and to vacate all seized administrative premises. It also has to condemn all terror and violence committed by those groups and to disassociate itself from such activities. Thirdly, it should stop its war-like rhetoric and start to act in a constructive and civilized manner. Last, but not least, Russia must refrain from any actions

aimed at undermining the 25 May presidential elections in Ukraine.

We call on the Security Council to give the most serious assessment of the actions and statements by Russia regarding Ukraine, and to take the most decisive steps to stop its aggressive appetite and to protect Ukrainian territorial integrity, which has been challenged once again.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I certainly do not want to prolong our meeting here this evening. The simplest of answers would be to again read the statement I made earlier, which refletcts our vision and position. However, allow me a very brief comment.

A great deal has been said here about some sort of wrong interpretation of our positions and statements in various forums and situations. Our Ukrainian colleague even began to depict some fantastic scenario of how he views the further developments unfolding in Ukraine. The only scenario that I would want to hear — but do not — is one that includes genuine efforts by the authorities in Kyiv to implement the Geneva document. Mr.Feltman began by saying that there were various interpretation of that document. The document is so simple, there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing to be done but to implement it. Let us do so. Russia helped to draw it up. But the actions backing it up need to be taken, first and foremost, by the authorities in Kyiv, if that is what they are. Unfortunately, their lack of action is reflected in the statement I made here earlier today.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.